

Appendix J. Alternatives Considered But Eliminated

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Introduction

In addition to the management alternatives described in Chapter 5, several additional alternatives were initially formulated and considered during the plan development process. Each of these additional alternatives were subsequently determined to be infeasible, imprudent, without significant benefit, or inconsistent with the legislation creating the Reserve (Chapter 2). These alternatives, and the reasons for which they were dismissed from further consideration, are described in this appendix.

High-Intensity Forest Restoration

Under this alternative, density management could be conducted in all previously harvested stands (i.e., in early-mature and older seral-stage harvested stands, in addition to the pole and sapling stands and openings that would be treated in the Moderate-Intensity Forest Restoration alternative). These older later seral stages, the “early-mature” and “older” stands, are characteristic of conditions found in oldest harvested areas within the Reserve. In these stands the average tree stem diameters generally exceeds 14 inches, average tree heights generally exceed 60– 80 feet, and average tree age generally exceeds 30 years.

This alternative was rejected from further consideration because thinning of these later seral-stage harvested stands will either create unacceptable fuel loading if on-site reduction is utilized or require road and landing development for biomass removal. Moreover, such older stands are not highly responsive to thinning. Tree removal in these older stands will maintain growth but may not significantly affect tree and stand attributes such as crown and canopy development. Therefore, this alternative would do little to accelerate the development of old-growth characteristics, which is the primary purpose of the forest restoration program.

South Fork Elk River Trail Extension

The development of a new trail along the South Fork Elk River upstream of the confluence with the Little South Fork was originally considered for inclusion in all of the trail system alternatives (Alternatives 4A, 4B, and 4C). Such a trail would be a dead-end spur trail 0.5–1 mile in length along the north bank of the river within the narrow corridor that is part of the Reserve. It was

considered for use by hikers, bikers, and equestrians. It would have provided an additional river and riparian woodland experience, but not an experience of old-growth forest.

This alternative was eliminated from detailed consideration because the narrowness of the public land corridor containing it would entice visitors to trespass on privately owned industrial timberlands where logging operations are ongoing. It would also be subject to frequent overflights by low-flying logging helicopters, subjecting users to noise and potential injury.

Bicycle Use on All Trails

The use of bicycles on all trails of the selected trail system was originally considered. Several of the trails considered for use or development under some alternatives would involve relatively steep gradients and, in some cases, switchbacks. Where road-to-trail projects are not possible, the new trails must be built with minimal widths to maintain ecological integrity (Chapter 2). These trails would be intended to provide users with recreation access to old-growth ecosystems in the Reserve and would not be intended for sporting purposes. The use of bicycles on these steeper or narrow trails would be a hazard to other trail users (i.e., hikers, or, in some alternatives, equestrians). Bicycle use, if allowed in the Reserve would be limited to gently sloping trails, where high speed is least likely (e.g., Elk River Corridor trail), or at least to specially-designed sinuous trails, where speed must be checked. Accordingly, the alternative of bicycle use on all trails was eliminated from further consideration.

Equestrian Use of the Southern Access

The development of facilities at the Salmon Creek Trailhead or Alicia Pass to accommodate equestrian activities was initially considered during alternatives formulation. It was eliminated from detailed consideration because terrain suitable for the construction of parking for horse trailer loading and unloading at these ridgetop locations is limited. A large volume of earth would be moved and graded to develop such facilities anywhere along the southern access road. Parking facility development would therefore involve constructing more-than-minimal facilities for access to the Reserve, which is prohibited by the authorizing legislation.

State of California Wildlife Management Area Designation

Designation of the Reserve as state wildlife management area (WMA) under Fish and Game Code section 1525-1530 was initially considered but eliminated in favor of consideration of state ecological reserve designation. WMAs are managed primarily to enhance the production of game species, while the management intent for the Reserve is to nurture and allow natural processes to operate at natural rates. According to the authorizing legislation, the Reserve is intended to be managed as an ecological reserve.